

Giants of Science

<https://gigancinauki.pl/ge/biographies/8243,Tadeusz-Apolinary-Wenda.html>
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Tadeusz Apolinary Wenda

Tadeusz Apolinary Wenda, (1863 – 1948), was born during the January Uprising in an intelligentsia family in Warsaw (his father Władysław was the head of the Archives of Historical Records). He received an education in his hometown and St. Petersburg, where he graduated from the Institute of Transportation Engineers with an engineering degree in 1890, and for the next ten years was involved in the design and construction of the railway network in the Russian empire, working on Murom-Kazan, Ural, Zanemensk, and Narva lines.

In the early twentieth century, Wenda became interested in sea transport. He had the opportunity to gain experience in this field while managing the construction of Baltic ports, such as the ones in Ventspils (today's Latvia) and Reval (Estonia). In independent Poland, he was initially appointed a supervisor of inland ports, but soon got transferred to the Department of Maritime Affairs at the Ministry of Military Affairs, to head the Port Construction Department. One of the most important tasks that Wenda was entrusted with was to select the location and prepare the design of a new seaport. Having examined the possibilities (such as Puck, Rewa and Hel), he concluded, as he said himself, "that the only and best site for a seaport is the valley between Kępa Oksywska and Kamienna Góra". The new port took its name from the nearby fishing village of Gdynia.

The chosen location was initially contested, then accepted, and Wenda got appointed the construction site manager. The works commenced in 1921. In 1922, the supervision of the project was taken over by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, but it was only thanks to a special act of the Parliament (in autumn 1922) that the work gained momentum. The official opening of the provisional seaport took place on 29 April 1923, but the enterprise did not receive adequate funds from



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the state budget until after the May Coup of 1926.

The role of Tadeusz Wenda turned out to be of primary importance – first as the head of the Port Construction Authority (1921-1930), and then supervisor of the 3rd Technical and Construction Department at the Maritime Office (where he was responsible not only for the investment but also hydro-technical and infrastructural issues). The project in which Wenda was instrumental led to the opening of the most modern Baltic port and to the transformation of Gdynia from a fishing village into a city with 120,000 residents in a very short time.

Wenda retired in 1937. After the war, his age and poor health did not allow him to get involved in rebuilding Polish ports, but his mission was continued by his pre-war associates.

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